

Visit to Khan Sha'ar HaGai (Bab El Wad) ©¹



Today (August 22, 2025) we visited the Khan Sha'ar HaGai Museum, and it was a truly moving experience. From the moment we received our entrance tags to the interactive exhibits and short films, the story of the brave young convoys of 1948 came alive. Walking through the museum, I felt their courage and sacrifice echo into the present — the struggles they faced are the same as our soldiers experience today. At the end, placing the tag on the wall became a personal act of remembrance and connection. It left us with tears in our eyes and deep gratitude in our hearts.

What it is:

- Historic caravanserai (roadside inn) built in the Ottoman period along the Jerusalem–Jaffa road.
- Recognizable by its row of stone arches facing the highway.
- In 1948, during the War of Independence, the site was a strategic choke point. Convoys bringing supplies to besieged Jerusalem had to pass through here, under constant Arab fire from the surrounding hills.

Today:

- The building itself still stands along the hillside, with its arched façade visible from the highway.
- Nearby is the Sha'ar HaGai Heritage Site & Visitors' Center, which tells the story of the convoys and the battle for Jerusalem.

¹ Created by Rifka Epstein, 2025©

- The name “Sha’ar HaGai” means “Valley Gate,” while the Arabic name “Bab el-Wad” means “Gate of the Valley” — both referencing this narrow passageway into the Judean Hills.

What You’re Seeing From the Road

The arched structure nestled atop the ridge is the historic Ottoman caravanserai (khan) that once served as a roadside inn for pilgrims and travelers journeying between Jaffa and Jerusalem. Built in the late 19th century, it included stables, a courtyard, and resting rooms — all crafted in stone with iconic arches.

During the 1948 War of Independence, the area around Sha’ar HaGai became a critical battleground as Jewish convoys tried to break the siege on Jerusalem. Today, the khan has been restored and serves as a heritage museum, recounting the heroism and endurance of those fighters .

Arched enclosures on a hillside These are the characteristic arches of the Ottoman khan

What’s There:

- The restored Khan building (with those iconic arches you see from the road).
- Heritage Center / Museum, with exhibits about the 1948 convoys and the fight to open the road to Jerusalem.
- Short walking paths and lookouts over the valley (“Bab el-Wad” = Gate of the Valley).

What to Expect at the Heritage Center

- The Ottoman Khan: The arched stone inn you’ve seen from the highway, now restored. You can walk up close and see its historic structure.
- Multimedia Exhibits: Inside the modern visitor center: powerful films, interactive screens, and stories of the convoys of 1948 that fought to keep Jerusalem supplied and alive.
- The Convoy Memorial: Outdoor displays of original armored vehicles that ran the gauntlet of Bab el-Wad under heavy fire.
- Lookout Points: Beautiful views over the valley (the “Gate of the Valley” / Bab el-Wad) — the same terrain that made this such a strategic choke point in ’48.
- Emotional Touch: The exhibits highlight not just battles, but the bravery and sacrifice of ordinary drivers, escorts, and fighters who risked everything to open the road.



Tip: The site is usually open Sun–Thu, and Fridays until early afternoon (closed Shabbat). It's best to check exact hours before you go — would you like me to pull the current opening times + ticket details for you?

Detail Information

Opening Hours Winter: 08:00–16:00, Summer: 08:00–17:00

Last Entry 1 hour before closing

Arrival Time 15 minutes before your scheduled slot

Reservation Required

Entry Fee Paid entry (free for Matmon pass holders)

Visit Length 50–90 minutes

Suggested Timeline (We were there Friday morning)

- 10:00 – Leave Beit Shemesh (our home)

Gives you a calm start to the day, avoiding early morning traffic 😊

→ Drive via Route 38 north to Sha'ar HaGai interchange, then merge briefly onto Route 1 east and take the Sha'ar HaGai exit. It is ~25 minutes drive.

- 10:30 – Arrive at Sha'ar HaGai Heritage Center

Park, check in, and start your tour.



Remember: they ask visitors to arrive 10 minutes before your reserved slot, so if you reserve for 12:45, you're perfect.

- 12:45–1:15 – Tour & Experience
 - Multimedia film about the convoys of 1948
 - Walk through the restored Khan with its arches
 - Outdoor armored vehicles memorial
 - Scenic lookout over Bab el-Wad

- 13:15–13:45 – Light Snack / Coffee Break (There are picnic spots nearby — nice moment to breathe before heading home).
- 14:00 – Head back toward Beit Shemesh

Retrace Route 1 west → Route 38 south → Beit Shemesh.

- 14:30 – Arrive home

Plenty of time to rest, prep, and welcome Shabbat calmly before candle lighting.



Tips for Friday Visit

- Reserve in advance online (spots are limited, especially Fridays).
- Bring a hat, water, and comfy shoes — the outdoor memorial and paths are in the sun.
- If you want, pack a small picnic — it feels special to sit in such a historic place.
- Check when is candle lighting if you are planning to go on Friday 😊

Check out this video from this search, bab el wad

song <https://share.google/smjWl1dLTleAp32Jc>

